

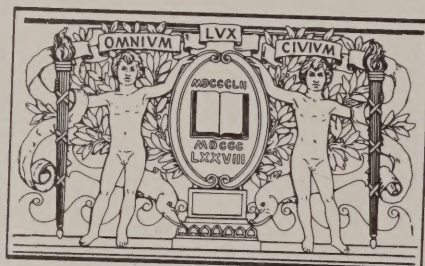
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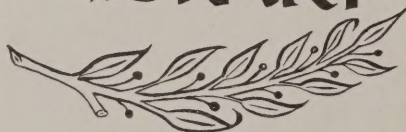


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I

BOSTON'S POPULATION PROSPECTS;
BACKGROUND NOTES

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Until recently, the prospects for population growth in the large, older cities of the United States were judged to be dismal. However, in the past few years, the evidence for a resurgence of city dwellers in Boston and across the nation, as a result of demographic trends, changing lifestyle preferences, and economic sector restructuring, has been noted.¹ Cities have been described as economically healthy because they are the center of the services industry, the fastest growing sector of the U.S. economy. This would provide an attractive force for residents and offset some of the fiscal problems facing the cities. The concentration of 20- to 34-year olds in the cities and their preference for urban life has been noted. But still the question has endured as to whether these factors could prevail to bring about a renaissance of the city as a place to live.

Arguments supporting this basic contention are now developing rapidly. These arguments are based on long-term demographic trends and changes in lifestyle patterns that are observable nationwide as well as in Boston. Within the year, the observations

Alexander Ganz and Thomas O'Brien, "New Directions for Our Cities in the Seventies", Technology Review, Vol. 76, No. 7, June 1974; Mary Tompkins et al., "Boston's Population: Reversal of Two Decades of Population Decline; Rebirth of the City as a Place to Live; Emergence of New Age Structure and Neighborhood Patterns", Research Department, Boston Redevelopment Authority, July 1973.

of and statistics generated by federal government, state government, and universities have pointed to the increasing likelihood of a significant increase in center city populations during the next decade.

William Alonso, the Director of the Population Studies Center at Harvard, took up this theme in a talk sponsored by the Joint Center for Urban Studies. As background to his remarks, he commented on the probable slow growth of metropolitan areas in the immediate future due to the lack of large numbers of rural persons to migrate to the cities and the lack of babies being born currently to swell the urban population. From there, Mr. Alonso elaborated on several facts.

First, due to past trends in fertility and mortality, there is an unexpectedly large number of persons 20- to 30-years old in the U.S. population. In the fifteen years since 1960, decreases have occurred in the number of children under 15, the largest increase has occurred in the 25-34 year age group, with the growth for those 65 and over slightly more than half that.² Currently, these Baby Boom young people tend to live

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U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 292 "Population Profile of the United States: 1975", U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1976.

in apartments, clustered in central cities, for the most part. In the next ten years, these young people will enter the period of settling down and seeking a permanent home, which for their parents meant a move to a single-family home in the suburbs. However, what kind of household formation will take place and where these large numbers of newly-formed households will be located may differ considerably from their parents' experience.

Secondly, there have been enormous changes in the structure of households and families in the United States since World War II. These trends have been accelerating recently. There has been a decline in husband-wife families as a percent of all households from 74.3 in 1960, to 70.5 in 1970, to 64.9 in 1976 and an increase in single-parent families. Female-headed households have increased from 8.4 in 1960, to 8.7 in 1970 to 10.1 percent of all households in 1976. Primary individuals have increased from 15.0 to 18.8 to 23.1 percent of households, accounting for almost half of the increase in households during 1970-75. One fifth of all households are now made up of a lone individual. Since 1970, the number of persons under 35 living alone has⁴ doubled.

³U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 296 "Households and Families by Type: March 1976", U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1976.

⁴U.S. Bureau of the Census, op. cit., Series P-20, No. 292.

Nationally, we have witnessed a considerable decline in household size, from 3.33 persons per household in 1960 to 3.14 in 1970 to 2.89 in 1976, with an 8 percent drop between 1970 and 1976.⁵ This may be expected to continue as fewer children are born and are expected to be born. The number of children that wives, 18-29 years old, expect to bear has fallen from 3.1 in 1960 to 2.9 in 1967, to 2.2 in 1974, with over 50 percent of wives now desiring 2, 1, or 0 children.⁶ These trends toward more households of smaller size have implications for the size of housing units needed.

Additionally, alternative living arrangements to conventional marriages and a higher turnover rate among marriages affect the turnover rate of housing. Of ever-married persons in the United States, a little over 15 percent have been married more than once, almost 6 percent are currently divorced and 3 percent are separated. Therefore, almost one-quarter of persons ever married have experienced a marital disruption. The incidence of a first divorce among persons approximately 30 years

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U.S. Bureau of the Census, op. cit., Series P-20, No. 296.

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U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Special Studies, Series p-23, No. 58 "A Statistical Portrait of Women in the United States", U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1976.

old has almost doubled since the end of World War II, to 13.1 percent of men and 17.1 percent of women ever married in 1975. It is expected that about 35 percent of this cohort of persons married once may eventually divorce. Second divorce has quintupled during the same 30-year period among persons in their early forties, to 8.0 percent of men and 11. percent of women married twice. Eventually, about 25 percent of those in this cohort who marry twice are expected to divorce. Moreover, almost 40 percent of those in their early thirties who marry are expected to marry and divorce twice.⁷

A third important factor Alonso foresees influencing household location within the metropolitan area is female participation in the labor force. He notes the traditional relationship between women central city residents and women in the labor force, and the long-term trend of increasing female labor force participation. Between 1960 and 1975, women accounted for 60 percent of

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U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 297 "Number, Timing and Duration of Marriages and Divorces in the United States: June 1975", U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1976.

the growth in the labor force, with large increases in participation among those 20-44 years. Over half the women in these age groups were in the labor force in 1975. In 1960, 38 percent of all women and 12 percent of mothers with children under 6 years old, the least participatory of women's age groups, worked. Currently, over 46 percent of women, over 44 percent of wives, about 43 percent of mothers, and 39 percent of mothers of pre-school children work.⁸ The increase in labor force participation among wives, among mothers, and among mothers of pre-schoolers has been such that the percentage of pre-school mothers currently working is larger than the percentage of all women who worked 15 years ago.

The implications of these trends in the national age structure, family structure, and female labor force participation are several and point to the location of newly forming households in the City. There will be an increase of new households with higher incomes per capita because there will be more workers and fewer children per household. These new households are likely to see accessibility as their major criterion for household location. Therefore, the tendency will be to live

⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, op. cit., Series P-20, No. 292; and Series P-20, No. 298 "Daytime Care of Children: October 1974 and February 1975", U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1976.

in the center city area to maximize proximity to two workplaces and to needed services, e.g., grocers, cleaners, retail stores, baby sitters, etc. The rapid turnover in marriages and in arrangements for persons living together suggest a shorter tenure in dwelling units might be expected. Therefore, the long-term commitment of a single family home mortgage might be viewed as a disadvantage. Multiple dwelling units would be more popular. Rehabilitation of existing units would occur, with the space being redesigned for smaller households, rather than extensive numbers of additional units being built.

Many of these same factors are and will be operating in the Boston metropolitan area. Population projections from the Massachusetts Office of State Planning (OSP) are available for the EMMMR region, which includes most of Eastern Massachusetts, and currently has 3.7 million residents, or two-thirds of Massachusetts population. Within this area, towns and cities are designated core cities, older cities, old suburbs, and new suburbs. The assumptions that Al Sanders of the Office of State Planning used in making the population projections parallel the national ones detailed above. First, Massachusetts and Eastern Massachusetts will experience a slower rate of population growth in the next several decades than they have in the past twenty years.

Second, the various parts of the EMMMR region are characterized by differing age and household structures of their populations. The core and older cities are predominantly the home of young persons 20-30 years old and of the elderly, with an absence of middle-aged persons who may have left voluntarily or may have been "pushed out" by young persons, especially students. The suburbs, on the other hand, have the bulk of their population in the middle years and very few persons in their twenties. This is probably due to the rapid buildup of the suburbs during the 1950s and 1960s. The young people who settled in the suburbs then are now middle-aged. They are unlikely to move in large numbers for some time, effectively tying up suburban housing for twenty years.

Third, the OSP assumes that people will remain in the Eastern Massachusetts region, given that current job prospects remain the same in the future. Fourth, the age structure of the residents of the region will change as they age. Between 1985 and 1990, those reaching age 30 will almost double the number reaching age 30 between 1965 and 1970. This presents the potential for a near doubling of the number of households, since this has traditionally been the age of household formation and settling down. The question remains: where will these new households be located, in the cities or in the suburbs?

The Office of State Planning has developed two alternative answers. The high dispersion scenario assumes that young people will continue to want and be able to move to the suburbs in the same proportions as in the recent past and that older people will tend to remain where they now live, in city or suburb. The low dispersion scenario maintains that new households are more likely to locate in cities than in suburbs because of the prevalence of unlikely-to-move, middle-aged population in the inner suburbs and likely pressures against a massive building up of the outer suburbs, e.g., conservation, changing tastes in residential locations, federal housing and loan policies, and alternative energy consumption patterns.

The implications (for city growth) of the high dispersion scenario are for stability of population size in the near future. A slight decline for the next five years would be followed by increases in numbers of city dwellers. Under the low dispersion scenario, 100,000 additional persons will be living in the core cities of Eastern Massachusetts 20 years from now.

Al Sanders of the OSP believes that low dispersion is more likely to occur than high dispersion in the Boston area. In support of this viewpoint, he notes the backup in the residential mobility chain stemming from suburban non-movers and causing

young households to choose between remaining in the city and moving to exurbia. Cities like Boston seem the more likely choice given the combination of declining household size and the pressures mentioned above.

